



April 2025

I hope everyone has enjoyed the wonderful weather we've had so far this year. It certainly made for a great St. Patrick's Parade and Festival downtown. And for our business community, the balmy weather has certainly helped draw a strong number of visitors and made for a successful winter season.

As we enter spring, let me update you about some progress that the City Commission has made to ensure Fort Lauderdale continues to be such a great place to live, work and visit.

There is a lot of excitement surrounding downtown.

Chicago-based Go Grocer is opening a hybrid grocery and convenience store model to Flagler Village. The retailer signed a lease at Motif, its first Florida location.

I've long said that the key to the future of downtown as a vibrant place to live would be the placement of grocery stores, drug stores, dry cleaners and other businesses within the neighborhood to support the needs of residents. The opening of stores like Go Grocer means downtown residents can meet many of their daily needs without getting in a car. It's truly becoming a walkable downtown.

Downtown's Museum of Discovery and Science also has been recognized as one of Newsweek's Best Children's Museums. With hands-on STEM exhibits, an IMAX theater and a dinosaur dig site, MODS continues to inspire learning for all ages.

Also, we are making big strides in the reimagining of Huizenga Park. the new Riverwalk is taking shape, particularly with the construction of the planned Riverwalk Overlook and the installation of a new seawall cap. We expect construction to be completed by the end of the year.

Huizenga Park will truly become downtown Fort Lauderdale's signature gathering place -- beautifully designed, activated, safe and comfortable. It will have space for everyone with its series of specially designed areas.

At the same time, park work is progressing across the city. We are committed to keeping the promises made to voters when they approved a bond issue for major park improvements.

In March, we approved the construction of new restrooms for Mills Pond Park, an item that has long been sought by the sports teams that use the park.

This \$7 million project will include a new recreation center with pool access, restrooms, fitness stations, landscaping as well as an interactive water feature. The updates should be completed by November 2026.

Construction is underway in Hardy Park. This includes better lighting, a paved pathway, a new playground, an improved exercise station and better security. This work should be completed this summer.

Work should start this summer on a second phase of upgrades at Holiday Park. Improvements will be made to the playground, dog park, restrooms and walkways.

In January, the City Commission made a major step on another front of improving recreation options at Holiday Park.

We approved a 10-year agreement with the United States Tennis Association involving upgrades to the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center. This strategic partnership aligns with the city's goal to enhance local sports facilities and promote Fort Lauderdale as a premier location for national sports events.

The agreement was facilitated by a generous \$1.5 million legacy gift from Orange Bowl Tennis. The money is designated to upgrade the facility to meet international standards, suitable for high-caliber tournaments and to once again attract top-tier tennis events to the city.

Under the agreement, the USTA will establish the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center as the new home for the Orange Bowl International Tennis Championships and will host additional quarterly tennis tournaments and clinics.

Over in Snyder Park, we are already seeing the success of The Fort pickleball facility.

It hosted its first major tournament, the Humana APP Fort Lauderdale Open, where pickleball pros, amateurs and viewers from all over the country gathered for five days of elite competition. The five gold medal matches aired nationwide on the CBS Sports Network.

The Fort is the result of a public-private partnership with My Park Initiative to develop the world's first dedicated pickleball stadium at an underutilized section of Snyder Park, just north of Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. The complex boasts 44 courts and seating for nearly 2,000 spectators.

We also have some critical initiatives underway involving roads and infrastructure.

We have repaved Las Olas Boulevard! Doesn't it look terrific? It's certainly a much easier drive.

We're beginning design work on street improvements in the Tarpon River and Shady Banks neighborhoods. And, construction will soon begin on improving Northwest 15th Avenue from East Sunrise Boulevard to Mills Pond Park.

We have big news regarding the Durrs neighborhood. The stormwater improvement project there is being completed a year early! In the Progresso Village neighborhood, we've approved a \$39.6 million project to reduce flooding and improve stormwater drainage.

But that's not all. The new police headquarters will be completed late this year. I recently took a tour of the new building to review its progress. Our community can look forward to an improved workspace for our officers as well as a new community space for meetings and events. We'll even be able to convene our City Commission meetings there until our new city hall is built.

Work is moving forward on the new water treatment plant. We are on time to begin operations by the fall of next year, and our water will now be clear, safe and abundant as our needs continue to grow.

We are beginning to install new high-tech water meters to better report residential water usage. It's high time we got a handle on water bills that spike for no discernable reason. These new meters will alert the city immediately when unusual usage is occurring and to make the homeowner aware of the situation.

Yes, great things are happening all over Fort Lauderdale. Stay tuned as 2025 will be an exciting year for the continued enhancement of our wonderful city.

Sincerely,

Dean